

European network for health technology assessment – EUnetHTA

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Abstract

In 2004, health technology assessment (HTA) was recognised as a ‘political priority’ by the EC and Council of Ministers, which led to a call to establish an effective and sustainable European network for HTA (EUnetHTA). The result was the establishment of the EUnetHTA Project in 2006. Since then, the work of this network for cross-border HTA cooperation within Europe has continued through various phases. The most innovative deliverable is the HTA Core Model[®] - a methodological framework that facilitates the production and sharing of HTA information. The current, Joint Action 2, phase of EUnetHTA aims to strengthen both the practical application of its tools and approaches to cross-border HTA collaboration, and to deliver recommendations on the implementation of a sustainable EUnetHTA.

Keywords: HTA, Health technology assessment, Network, EUnetHTA, Methodology

Most European countries have public agencies to evaluate health technologies. These agencies undertake health technology assessments (HTAs), to bring together and summarise scientific evidence to inform policy makers, clinicians, and the public on the safety, effectiveness and costs of new or established health technologies. Although HTAs are specific to particular countries with their diverse national priorities and systems, there is inevitably considerable overlap between the assessments undertaken in the different European countries.

In 2004, the European Commission and Council of Ministers targeted HTA as ‘a political priority’ recognising *an urgent need for establishing a sustainable European network on HTA*.¹

This call for a European network on HTA to inform policy decisions was answered in 2005 by a group of 35 government-appointed organisations throughout Europe, which led to the establishment

of the European network for HTA (EUnetHTA) Project in 2006. The ensuing activities of the network were organised through establishment of the EUnetHTA Collaboration in 2009, the EUnetHTA Joint Action in 2010–2012, and the current EUnetHTA Joint Action 2 in 2012–2015.

The strategic objectives of EUnetHTA are:

- To increase collaborative production of timely and fit for purpose HTA information that is applicable in national or regional HTA production and decision making.
- To increase reliability, quality, and relevance of HTA thus expanding its applicability for policy making.
- To build capacities in HTA.

The EUnetHTA network aims to maximise the use of existing evidence and reduce overlap of effort in HTA activities in Europe. EUnetHTA supports collaboration between European HTA organisations that facilitates the efficient use of the resources available for HTA, creates a sustainable system of HTA knowledge sharing, and promotes good practice in HTA methods and processes.

The most innovative scientific and practical product of EUnetHTA, so far, is the HTA Core Model[®] - a methodological framework for developing and sharing HTA information. This model provides a common structured format to facilitate effective national and transnational production and sharing of HTA results, and represents a wide range of perspectives.

Among other current results of EUnetHTA activities are methodological guidelines for assessing the relative effectiveness of pharmaceuticals focusing on clinical endpoints, composite endpoints, surrogate endpoints, health-related quality of life, internal validity, applicability, choice of comparator, direct and indirect comparisons, and safety.²

The EUnetHTA Planned and Ongoing Projects (POP) Database and The Evidence Database on New Technologies (EVIDENT) are additional key deliverables of EUnetHTA. EVIDENT allows sharing and storage of information on the reimbursement or coverage status of technologies, and on requested additional studies (under development or implemented),³ and POP allows EUnetHTA partners and associates to share information on planned, ongoing, or recently published projects of participating agencies. The aim of POP is to facilitate collaboration among European HTA agencies and reduce duplication of work.⁴

In October 2012, EUnetHTA embarked on the latest stage of its work through a second Joint Action, which will last until 2015, focusing on strengthening the practical application of the tools developed for cross-border HTA cooperation in Europe with the objective of developing a general strategy, principles, and an implementation proposal for a sustainable European HTA collaboration according to the requirements of Article 15 of the Directive 2011/24/EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare.⁵

The collaboration among European countries through EUnetHTA can support and improve

national HTA processes. Further information and updates on work in progress and the achievements of EUnetHTA can be found at www.eunethta.eu.

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Author information

Julia Chamova has more than 15 years of experience in coordinating cross-border HTA collaboration projects and activities for both private and public healthcare organisations. As Director of Operations for EUnetHTA, Julia has been in charge of operational management, development of the governance and organisation structure of the European HTA network, its stakeholder involvement policy, and long-term strategy development.

Julie Lange has a master's degree in International Business Communication and European Studies. As the communication officer of EUnetHTA, she manages both internal and external communication activities in cooperation with EUnetHTA's Work Package 2 on Dissemination.